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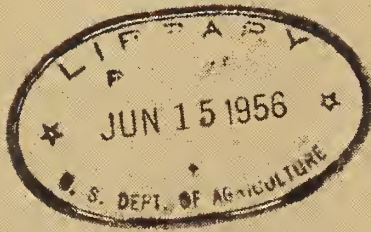
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FACTS ABOUT

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YEARS OF



FEDERAL MEAT INSPECTION



U.S. Agricultural Research Service
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
April 1956

HIGHLIGHTS

June 30, 1906--Congress passed the law requiring Federal inspection for cleanliness and wholesomeness of all meat moving in interstate and foreign commerce.

Today--80 percent of the Nation's commercial meat supply bears the small purple circle indicating Federal approval--the largest proportion in our history. The remainder is subject to State or local sanitary regulations.

Today--1,154 meat processing establishments are under Federal inspection as of January 31, 1956 . . . the largest number so far.

Now--more than 100,000,000 meat animals are being slaughtered annually under Federal inspection. . . and the number is increasing.

Cooperation--Packers and processors cooperate actively with the Federal meat inspection service to assure the public of a continuing supply of clean and wholesome meat, free from adulteration and truthfully labeled.

Benefits--Federal meat inspection benefits the consumer in health protection and economic advantage . . . the industry by its powerful effect on consumer confidence . . . the farmer by contributing to a steady consumer demand for meat.

Cost--Federally financed meat inspection assures the public of a clean and wholesome supply of meat and meat products at a cost of 9 cents per person per year, less than 15 cents per animal slaughtered . . . a tiny fraction of a cent per pound of meat and meat products consumed.

Information in this report was furnished by the
Meat Inspection Branch, Agricultural
Research Service

FACTS ABOUT: FIFTY YEARS OF FEDERAL MEAT INSPECTION

This year marks the golden anniversary of the Federal meat inspection service. For 50 years this agency, with full cooperation of packers and processors, has guarded the Nation's meat supply--in the public interest.

For half a century, the round purple stamp on federally inspected meat has assured homemakers that the meat comes from healthy animals and is clean and wholesome. The same assurance in print is on the label of federally inspected canned meats and other meat products, including nowadays the latest in frozen meat patties, meat pies, and TV dinners.

On June 30, 1906, Congress enacted the law requiring Government supervision over cleanliness and wholesomeness of meat that is marketed in interstate and foreign commerce.

The Secretary of Agriculture is responsible for issuing regulations necessary in carrying out provisions of this law and for maintaining the Federal meat inspection service. The work began in the United States Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Animal Industry. It is now carried on by the Meat Inspection Branch in the Agricultural Research Service of the Department. The inspection work deals with cattle, calves, sheep, and hogs for meat use.

Currently, 80 percent of the meat and meat food products produced commercially are processed for interstate use, and bear the purple stamp or a legend on the can, package, or jar, attesting Federal inspection and approval.

Meat and meat food products prepared and sold entirely within a State are not required to be federally inspected but are subject to State and local inspection requirements.

The Federal meat inspection system is effective because:

- *The law is preventive . . . need not wait for violations to occur.
- *The regulations combine the strict and the practical.
- *Industrial establishments cooperate well with Federal inspectors.

Benefits to all concerned

A half-century of Federal meat inspection has brought benefits to the meat-eating public and to the entire meat industry, as well.

- *The public gets health protection and pocketbook savings when it can count on wholesomeness and truthful labeling of meat purchases.
- *Every one whose livelihood depends on meat in any way profits from public confidence in a wholesome meat supply. This valuable goodwill asset has a strong stabilizing effect on meat buying.
- *Livestock producers and feeders especially benefit because they are thus assured of a better market for their meat animals--and for the grains and grasses which livestock convert into highly concentrated and nutritious foods. The inspection system permits early detection of

obscure animal diseases, thus affording added protection against losses in livestock herds and flocks.

Looking backward

When Federal inspection of this country's meat supplies began, a foundation for the work was already laid.

In 1890, at the request of the meat industry, Congress enacted a law providing Federal inspection of meat for export. Foreign markets for meat were then large. This country's share in the profitable trade was threatened because European buyers wanted official evidence that our meats came from healthy stock. The law of 1890 saved this export trade.

The law of 1890 had the more far-reaching effect of giving the Department of Agriculture experience in establishing a meat inspection system, and providing the standards, regulations, and trained staff for such work.

When Congress in 1906 enacted the law providing for Federal inspection of the domestic meat supply prepared for interstate use, Federal inspection for the export trade was already being conducted in 163 establishments in 58 cities. The inspection service was in a position to start on its bigger task without delay. In 1907, the first full year under the new law, Federal inspection was maintained in 702 establishments in 196 cities.

The service, from its beginning, set its objectives high and drafted regulations minutely detailed. Procedures and policies that were adopted for insuring the production of wholesome meats established a standard that has become a pattern for the entire world. These methods are still followed, and as a result our meats are unexcelled in wholesomeness by those of any other country.

How the system works

The broad scope of the law and the responsibilities of the service are shown in the following list of 7 distinct lines of duty:

- Inspecting sanitation of the establishment.
- Inspecting animals before slaughter.
- Inspecting carcasses and internal organs of animals after slaughter.
- Inspecting meat processing, and preparation of meat food products.
- Destroying material condemned for food purposes.
- Supervising application of the stamp or label indicating Federal approval.
- Maintaining chemical, bacteriological, pathological, and zoological laboratories, to furnish inspectors with information needed in making proper decisions.

As the list indicates, Federal inspection begins with approval of a plant's construction and equipment. Specialists on the Federal meat inspection staff pass on the suitability. Once a plant set-up is approved and inspection started, the establishment is required to maintain the sanitation standards. Other requirements include efficient lighting, good drainage and

good ventilation, ample hot water under pressure, convenient places at which to sterilize instruments and for workers to keep clean. Machinery moves slowly enough to allow inspectors to examine properly each carcass as it passes before them.

To keep up with progress, regulations are revised from time to time. For example, plumbing and lighting requirements have changed. Stainless steel for hooks, tables and trucks has replaced metals that could be kept rust free only by constant polishing.

Many Federal meat inspectors are graduates in veterinary medicine, with special training for their particular field. They are in charge of all inspection of animals and carcasses for disease. The remainder are given special training for their assignments. All inspectors in the service must qualify, not only in ability, but also in character and personal health.

Inspection of meat begins with live animals resting in holding pens in the yards. Here, the trained inspector picks out any animal that looks abnormal. He ear-tags such animals either "U. S. Condemned" or "U. S. Suspect." If tagged condemned, the animal is excluded then and there from prospect of food use. If tagged suspect, the animal is slaughtered separately and the carcass is given special examination before it is passed or rejected.

Following this pre-slaughter inspection comes the post-slaughter inspection given to every carcass that starts on the meat route. Inspectors examine the glands and organs as well as the carcass, and give special attention to parts in which abnormalities are likely to make their first appearance. This system of detailed inspections, together with careful reporting, makes it possible quickly to trace obscure animal diseases directly back to herds from which they came. Steps can then be taken immediately to stamp out all possible sources of infection, often resulting in savings to producers that otherwise might be disastrous.

Federal supervision and inspection continue through each stage of the meat's preparation for market. All along the line the public gets the benefit of any doubt.

The round purple stamp is placed on each inspected-and-passed carcass and cut--fresh or frozen; also on sausages and cured meats. The purple stamping fluid is harmless, and consumers have no need to remove it from meat they cook. A number on each stamp indicates the packing house where the meat was prepared.

Where meats are cured or otherwise processed, Federal inspection calls for supervision of every procedure and material used . . . for example, the cleanliness of cans and all ingredients packed in them . . . methods used in filling and sealing cans . . . adequacy of heat applied in canning.

Final approval takes the form of a printed statement on the can, wrapper, or other container: "U. S. Inspected and Passed by Department of Agriculture." Before this approval, the label itself passes accuracy tests to be sure that pictures and wording give an exact description of the contents. Each year thousands of proposed new labels are submitted by inspected establishments for approval.

Condemned carcasses or parts of carcasses are kept under the inspector's control. Such meat is held under Federal lock and key until it is processed for fertilizer or inedible grease. Salvage of unfit meat combines practical thrift with safe disposal.

From time to time, inspectors take samples of finished meat products, and ingredients, and other materials used at an inspected establishment. They send the samples to one of the 7 laboratories maintained by the meat inspection service for chemical analysis or other tests. These laboratories test even such things as the cleaning solutions used in a plant and the plastic materials for packaging meats, to make sure that the material will not contaminate the meat.

Salaries of Federal meat inspectors are paid by the Government. However, the industry reimburses the Department for the cost of providing overtime service. The system has been highly efficient from the start.

Counting all operations, administration, and laboratory tests, meat inspection costs in the Federal system amount to less than 15 cents an animal. Individually, they amount to 9 cents a year for each of us . . . which is only a tiny fraction of a cent per pound of meat consumed.

FIGURE FACTS

Importance of Meat

The United States meat industry is the world's biggest . . . its output is 25 billion pounds a year. People in this country use nearly all of this.

One-fourth of our food money goes for meat . . . the leading item in family food budgets.

Currently the average person in this country eats about 160 pounds of meat a year. This is one of the principal reasons why the United States today is one of the best fed nations in the world.

Nutritionally important, meat from cattle, calves, sheep, and hogs provides 25 percent of the protein in this country's food. Along with this valuable, high-quality protein, meat provides generous proportions of calories, fat, minerals, and vitamins for good nutrition . . . 30% of the fat; 16% of the calories; 25% of the iron; 33% of the niacin; 25% of the thiamin; 15% of the riboflavin; 9% of the vitamin A.

Wholesomeness of meat

Fully 80 percent of this country's commercial production of meat is currently marketed with the Federal stamp of approval . . . the largest proportion in our history.

Meat animals slaughtered under Federal inspection currently number about 100,000,000 . . . and the number is increasing.

Federal inspectors in 1956 are servicing 1,154 establishments (as of January 31) . . . the largest number thus far. The number of plants serviced is increasing, with the trend toward decentralization in the industry, and the introduction of many new products, such as frozen meat pies and meat and vegetable plates.

Cents and dollars

Federal inspection is federally financed, costs the United States about 9 cents per person a year.

Cost of Federal inspection per pound of meat is a tiny fraction of one cent.

Cost per animal inspected is less than 15 cents.

Healthy farm stock

Prevailing soundness of this country's farm stock is shown by the small percentage of animals found unfit during Federal meat inspection. In recent years condemned animals amount to only about 1/4 of 1 percent of those federally examined.

